

Message Text

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43

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

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FM AMCONSUL BILBAO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 466

INFO AMEMBASSY MADRID

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, SP, BE

SUBJ: EASTER WEEK-END IN BASQUE COUNTRY

REF: BILBAO 038

1. SUMMARY: DURING THE EASTER HOLIDAYS, THE BASQUE COUNTRY WAS THE SCENE OF NUMEROUS BOMBINGS, AND ETA ASSASSINATION OF A POLICE INSPECTOR IN SAN SEBASTIAN AND THE ANNUAL BASQUE REUNION(ALBERRI EGUNA) IN GUERNICA. TWO BELGIAN MP'S WERE ARRESTED AND DEPORTED AFTER GOING TO GUERNICA FOR THE PURPOSE OF DEMONSTRATING THE CONTINUED LACK OF FREE SPEECH IN SPAIN. END SUMMARY.

2. THE EASTER WEEK-END BEGAN WITH A BANG ON MAR 27 WITH THE EXPLOSION OF FOUR BOMBS AT SEVERAL COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENTS IN THE HEART OF THE TRADITIONAL BASQUE TOWN OF GUERNICA, IN WHICH THE ANNUAL BASQUE NATIONALIST REUNION WAS TO BE HELD ON EASTER SUNDAY. THE EARLY MORNING BLASTS CAUSED DAMAGES ESTIMATED AT 5.5 MILLION PESETAS BUT NO DEATHS OR INJURIES.

3. THE GUERNICA BOMBINGS (AS WELL AS A NUMBER OF OTHERS AT THE SAME TIME) WERE FOLLOWED ON MARCH 29 BY THE MACHINEGUN

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ASSASSINATION OF A SAN SEBASTIAN POLICE INSPECTOR WHO,

(ACCORDING TO A BILBAO POLICE AGENT) WORKED IN THE INVESTIGATION
SECRET SERVICE. ETA CLAIMED CREDIT FOR THE SHOOTING IN AN
ANNOUNCEMENT ISSUED IN BORDEAUX, FRANCE.

4. GUERNICA WAS ALSO THE SCENE OF THE ANNUAL BASQUE PILGRIMAGE ON
"ABERRI EGUNA" (DAY OF THE FATHERLAND) ON EASTER SUNDAY. ARMED
POLICE SET-UP CONTROL INSPECTION POINTS ON ALL ROADS LEADING
INTO GUERNICA AND AT LEAST THREE BUSES AND A DOZEN OR SO LAND
ROVERS CROWDED WITH POLICE WERE STATIONED INSIDE THE TOWN.
POLICE TURNED BACK SOME CARS, SEIZED A NUMBER OF IDENTITY DOCUMENTS
AND DETAINED SOME 40 VISITORS INCLUDING SOME WHO ARRIVED BY TRAIN.

5. THE ONLY REAL INCIDENT DURING "ABERRI EGUNA" INVOLVED TWO
BELGIAN MP'S OF THE FLEMISH FEDERAL UNION PARTY, IDENTIFIED IN THE
PRESS AS WALTER LUYTEN AND WILLYS KUIJPERS. UPON COMING OUT OF A
CHURCH THEY SHOUTED THEIR SOLIDARITY WITH THE BASQUE NATIONALISTS
AND UNFURLED A LARGE WHITE CLOTH ON WHICH WERE PAINTED BASQUE
SEPARATIST SLOGANS AND TWO FLAGS REPRESENTING THE BASQUE COUNTRY
AND EUROPE. THEY WERE ARRESTED BY POLICE ALONG WITH AN AMERICAN
FREE LANCE WRITER (SEE BILBAO 038). THE MP'S WERE SUBSEQUENTLY
DEPORTED TO FRANCE. THEY INDICATED THAT THIS DEMONSTRATION OF
THE LACK OF FREEDOM OF SPEECH IN SPAIN WOULD ENABLE THEM TO
PROVIDE VALID OPPPOSITION TO ANY NEW EFFORTS BY SPAIN TO JOIN
EUROPEAN ENTITIES SUCH AS EEC AND NOTO.

6. COMMENT: DURING AND AFTER A VISIT TO GUERNICA, I TALKED TO
SOME BASQUE NATIONALISTS WHO HAD GONE TO GUERNICA, SOME OF WHOM
CLAIMED TO HAVE TALKED TO ETA MEMBERS ABOUT RECENT EVENTS. THEY
ALL STATED THAT THE BOMBED ESTABLISHMENTS BELONGED TO POLICE
INFORMERS AND THAT THE ASSASSINATED POLICEMAN HAD BEEN
GUILTY OF TORTURING POLITICAL PRISONERS. IT IS CLEAR
THAT THE BOMBINGS AND ASSASSINATION PROVOKED TIGHTER POLICE
CONTROLS AND LED TO RUMORS OF POSSIBLE VIOLENT POLICE REACTION
TO ANY POSSIBLE INCIDENT ON "ABERRI EGUNA" (GOVT HAS ANNOUNCED
68 "ABERRI EGUNA"-CONNECTED ARRESTS). THIS CLIMATE OF
FEAR CAUSED MANY TO STAY AWAY FROM GUERNICA. THE MANY POLICE
IN EVIDENCE, PICTURES OF ALLEGED ETA VICTIMS PLASTERED ON
BUILDINGS, OTHER GOVERNMENT ANTI- "ABERRI EGUNA" PAMPHLETS
SCATTERED ABOUT THE STREETS, AND THE BRIEF INCIDENT INVOLVING
THE BELGIAN MP'S, CONSTITUTED THE ONLY EVIDENCE THAT THIS WAS
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NOT JUST AN ORDINARY EASTER SUNDAY.

4. EMBASSY COMMENT: THESE EVENTS HAVE ONCE AGAIN CHARGED BASQUE
POLITICAL CLIMATE. ETA'S OBJECTIVES IN ASSASSINATION APPEAR TO HAVE
BEEN PROVOKE WIDESPREAD RETALIATORY ACTIONS BY GOVT, WHICH REPRESSSION
WOULD PLAY INTO ETA HANDS, AND TO ALSO SPOIL GUERNICA COMMEMORATIONS
OF MODERATE AND DEMOCRATIC-ORIENTED PNV BASQUE NATIONALIST PARTY.

(IN LAST YEAR'S "ABERRI EGUNA", PNV ACHIEVED PROPAGANDA SUCCESS
BY CLANDESTINELY BRINGING BASQUE PRESIDENT-IN-EXILE LEIZAOLA FROM
FRANCE TO GUERNICA.)

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